

The Cocoa Romance

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Low on love?

Chocolate is a key romance ingredient in many of Michael Webb's recommendations in his book: *101 Romantic Ideas*.¹ Owner of the website TheRomantic.com, Michael devotes a whole page to romantic chocolate ideas.² And why shouldn't he? Isn't chocolate



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the most craved food by females?³ Indeed, 45% of American women *regularly* crave chocolate.⁴ Thanks to Phenethylamine (PEA),⁵ the "love hormone", and

other psychoactive substances, cocoa is a powerful stimulator of the sexual pleasure center of the brain⁶ and is a driver of erotic behavior.⁷ As could be expected, women indulging in more cocoa products score higher points on the Female Sexual Function Index.⁸

Food of the Gods

Is chocolate's addictive power limited to its role as icon of America's love affair with sex or does it have a magic all its own? The most active ingredient in chocolate is theobromine; its name is taken from the Greek name of the plant from which this product is derived *Theobroma Cacao*, which literally means, "cocoa—food of the gods".⁹ Complemented, as it is in chocolate, with caffeine,¹⁰ theobromine is responsible for much of the addictive power of your favorite cocoa product.¹¹ This "food of the gods" maybe more addictive than you bargained for.^{12,13}

Heroine or Heroin

Studies show that chocolate trumps hot chili pepper on food, people's favorite alcoholic beverage, video games, coffee, tea, cola beverages, gambling, and even cigarettes in its addictive power.¹⁴ People with a lack of control around chocolate are called "Chocoholics".¹⁵ Could chocoholics really be closet heroin addicts? That may be stretching it a bit, but humans and animals given a drug which blocks their body's opioid receptors (receptors activated by drugs such as heroin, morphine and opium) virtually lose their addictive attraction to chocolate.^{16,17} Thus, chocolate's addictive power lies in its ability to stimulate the same opioid receptors in the brain as morphine. Maybe this explains the pervasiveness of this annual \$17 billion, 3.5 million ton industry from which the average American obtains around 22 pounds of cocoa per year.¹⁸ And why isn't morphine allowed as

an ingredient in candy? Narcotics enfeeble and degrade the intellect, lower the morals and cause a person to lose the power to resist temptation.

Mary Jane on the Brain

But what of the euphoria well known to chocolate devotees? While you won't turn positive for cannabinoids on a urine drug screen, chocolate is like Marijuana. There are three substances in chocolate that activate cannabinoid receptors in the brain and mimic the psychoactive effects of marijuana.¹⁹ Is it any wonder that chocolate is widely believed to enhance the effect of marijuana.²⁰ SPECT scan studies of the brains of cannabis users reveal an appalling lack of neural activity in the frontal lobes. The frontal lobes are where your conscience is located—where you discriminate between right and wrong and make important moral decisions. Paul declares, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." 1Corinthians 6:12 A Christian should never use a product that will bring them under its power. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Romans 6:16.

If You Like It, Why Not Claim It's Healthy?

In her article published in the journal *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*, "Chocolate: the health food", Vickie A. Miracle states, "Then there are times I believe I was born too early. I have been

proclaiming chocolate as a health food since I was 6 years old! I do confess to being a chocoholic and proud of it. Now science has caught up with my theory. Chocolate does have health benefits. These benefits have been reported in the literature for more than 10 years. While the history of the cacao plant and chocolate is very interesting, it is



not the intent of this editorial to discuss this. Rather, this editorial will explain why chocolate may have health benefits, some of its benefits, its disadvantages, and current recommendations for those who

enjoy eating chocolate.”²¹ I have no grumble with the trend in our society to elevate the value of health to an all time high. And maybe we should be happy that this author does not live in a culture where some practices offensive to our thinking reigns supreme, else we might be obliged to read editorials touting chocolate as just the thing to make primitives better hunters, Eskimos better whalers, and French better.... You get the idea. This elevating of substances of questionable nutritional value includes such delicacies as rotten apples sold as “organic apple cider vinegar”, inebriating red wine touted as good for your heart, medicinal marijuana—the legalization of a brain destroyer and formerly discarded whey powder as good to build your muscles. It seems that chocolate is so subtly destructive to your intellect and morals as to make its promulgation as a health product seem plausible. If you like it, why not just claim you like it, why purport to have discovered medicinal properties for it?

Weight Loss Wonder

With obesity at an all time high and the existence of a \$60 billion per year weight loss market why not sponsor a weight loss study? According to Carol E. O’Neil, Victor L. Fulgoni III and Theresa A. Nicklas, in their article of June 2011, which appeared in *Food & Nutrition Research*, “Total, chocolate, and sugar candy consumption was not associated with weight/adiposity variables and candy

consumers were less likely to be overweight or obese than non-candy consumers.” “Current levels of candy consumption were not associated with adverse health parameters in children or adolescents.” One is called to wonder how these things



can be so. Doesn’t this go against conventional wisdom? But further investigation reveals that under the heading “Conflict of interest and funding” it is admitted, “Partial support was also received from the National Confectioners Association.”²² Research has become merely a line item in an advertizing budget. Many of these commercial enterprises have research funding that far exceed the entire yearly budget of the National Institute of Health. Imagine the economic value of a scientific discovery. “Science” discovers that chocolate cures some disease, news agencies spread the story, and people opt for one more scoop of chocolate ice cream at the dairy stand.

Hair On Bald Heads And Feeling In Peg Legs

The list of medicinal properties for chocolate is growing. Researchers reach for the dark, flavonoid rich vial marked cocoa and test subjects turn up healthier.²³ But where did this nasty

tasting laboratory version of the common candy bar come from? These specially prepared cocoa samples are not the same as the readily available commercial products people buy in the store.²⁴ The street variety tends to be loaded with fat and sugar and only overthrows a persons resistance to indulgence of appetite.²⁵ Indeed, up to 98% of calories in chocolate preparations comes from fat and sugar.^{26,27} Sugar, by itself, is a drug of addiction. The addictive nature of sugar generates phenomenally high levels of obesity.²⁸ Sugar surpasses cocaine in its ability to elevate the addiction hormone dopamine in the brain making sugar more addictive than some street drugs.²⁹ And why all the fat in this product? The sensory experience of tasting fat overpowers self-control and increases food intake even in people who are usually restrained eaters.³⁰ Taken in combination, fat and sugar work to weaken food satisfaction signals to the brain and activate hunger signals driving excessive food consumption.^{31,32}

Easter Bunny or Trojan Horse?

Taste good? Yes! But not all chocolate’s effects generate good health:

- The amount of cocoa contained in one half ounce of milk chocolate when taken daily is enough to double the risk of prostate cancer.³³
- Daily chocolate consumption lowers bone density and strength,³⁴ due in part to increasing the volume of precious bone calcium lost in the urine.³⁵
- Sweet tooth? Will your teeth appreciate cocoa suspended in creamy milk? No, dental cavities multiply with such concoctions.³⁶
- That burn in the chest, is it heart troubles? Not likely, chocolate is billed as heart healthy.³⁷ Try heartburn!³⁸ Chocolate relaxes the lower esophageal sphincter causing reflux and pain symptoms.^{39,40}
- Romantic dreams or nightmares? A disorder that gives people nightmares and makes them move violently in their sleep could be aggravated by eating chocolate. ⁴¹
- Constipation complicates the treatment of hospital patients on morphine. Chocolate is perceived by many people as a constipating food, possibly by the same opioid receptor stimulating mechanism as morphine.⁴²
- Chocolate on the brain? Foods more commonly reported as headache triggers include: alcoholic drinks, chocolate and cheese.^{43,44,45}

And why does chocolate share disease triggering properties with cheese? Both are fermented products! Fermentation, like the rotting of apples to make vinegar, contaminates products with toxins known to cause illnesses. What happens to a box of good apples when you throw a rotten one in the batch? They all rot.

What happens when you eat rotten foods? You rot—otherwise known as oxidative stress, free radical formation, and lipid peroxidation. People consuming aged, rotted, fermented, spoiled foods suffer the consequences. Maybe this is why chocolate is a huge red flag for autoimmune inflammatory conditions.

- Inflammation is the key ingredient in inflammatory bowel disease. Cocoa products increase the risk of ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease by a whopping 150%.^{46,47}
- And what of rheumatoid arthritis? Chocolate aggravates the symptoms of inflammatory arthritis making it harder to bear.^{48,49}
- Are worms the only instigator of an itchy anus? Think chocolate. Cocoa products are among the top 6 foods causing "Pruritus Ani"⁵⁰
- Chocolate increases the risk of acne by 40% in teenage boys.⁵¹
- The psychoactive components of chocolate are concentrated in breast milk,⁵² and infants breastfeeding on mothers eating chocolate are more likely to experience allergic dermatitis.⁵³

Don't be fooled, not everything made out to be pure gold is really gold at all.

Dark Chocolate

"Hey Clark, your going to love this one," David was animate, "they (the TV) just exposed the west Africa slave trade in the production of half the world's chocolate. Teenagers are stolen from places like Togo and taken to Ivory Coast chocolate plantations where they are literally worked to death in 4 years." Shocking, I thought, but at the time, not being a TV watcher and having no way to verify the account, I shuffled the information to the back of my mind. Then, when conducting this current chocolate investigation I decided to explore the story. Factual beyond controversy, it's now all over the internet.⁵⁴ Chocolate, due to its addictive nature, is one of those products, along with sugar, opium and other drugs, coffee, tea, tobacco, and other cash crops that have helped create the poverty-stricken third world. Man's insatiable desire for something stimulating, and the greed

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of the empires, have synergized to plunder the economies and ecologies of the poorer agrarian nations.⁵⁵

An older Jamaican related to me his experience on the coffee plantations of their island nation. The English started Jamaica growing cash crops, then pitted them against Guyana, who they had also started growing these crops. When the English traders lowered the price they offered for coffee to the point that the Jamaicans would lose money, the president of Jamaica was forced to plead with them to raise the going price. The English just stated that they could get the coffee cheaper from Guyana. My Jamaican friend was still incensed that the president of his country should be so humiliated. Such are the atrocities that reduced stable agricultural based nations to poverty, subservience, and near starvation.

Home to Roost

How many weeks would you be willing to have one of your family members go and labor on a chocolate plantation to obtain your



precious "food of the gods"? It would be a most memorable experience. They'd lose weight; have scars all over their backs in testimony to the appreciation they were shown, and perhaps be grateful to just escape with their lives. Next time you sink your teeth into a luscious bar of rich tasty chocolate pause to consider how many teenage Africans gave their lives for your excess.

The Biggest Losers

Who are the greatest slaves here, the unpaid child laborers who have no say in the matter, the greedy unscrupulous plantation owners who organize such crimes against humanity, or the addicted product users who for a moment of pleasure are willing to brush over their accountability in this whole drama? There is no more subtle form of slavery than when the captives will their own captivity.

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